Peakocon...? Sciffisteddffod...?

Unicon 12 in North Wales

Mabinogicon

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After the cancellation of ICON, there is no bid for the 1991 Unicon. This could mean the end of a series of successful and popular cons, so a rescue bid has stepped in to fill the gap. The bid in question comes from that well-known beating heart of fandom North Wales, specifically the University College of North Wales at Bangor; it is run by a group of Bangor students helped out by a few more experienced hands.

Since the bid is something of a last-minute affair, we don't have too many details down pat at the moment. We plan to take advantage of the local environment, exploring Celtic and specifically Welsh themes in fantasy and sf; to live up to the ghastly pun of one of our suggested names by discussing music in sf and vice versa; and, with the help of the ICON crew, to pick up some of the ideas behind their planned science programme. And anything else that comes to mind. The college's unusual specialisations--UCNW is a world leader in Welsh studies and in ocean science--will enable us to take a slightly slanted look at sf and fantasy themes. And we'll keep up any Unicon traditions that we can get our hands on.

Bangor is a small city of about 17000 people, squashed between the mountains of Snowdonia and the Menai Straits. It is therefore not overendowed with mod cons (MacDonalds addicts can expect to be disappointed), though it's perfectly habitable--we know 'cos we've done it--and once you get out of the city, you're in some of the most beautiful and remarkable country in Britain. Snowdon is some twenty minutes' drive away, Anglesey is just over the Menai Bridge, and if the weather permits there are marvellous views from Bangor Mountain and Glanrafon Hill--the hill on which our site, Rathbone hall of residence, is situated. It's horribly tempting to advise you to forget the programme and the bar and just head for the hills. (Or the sea. Or local attractions like Portmeirion, Caernarfon Castle, the Machynlleth Centre for Alternative Technology... Or, of course, the sheep.) You'll certainly be missing something if you don't take at least a short look around. Even the otherwise ordinary town centre can be fun if you enjoy trying to match the Welsh words on bilingual road signs to the English ones.

In many ways, Bangor can offer you the best of both worlds: it's a marvellous tourist base, and easily accessible by bus, car or train, but is sufficiently out-of-the-way to retain a relaxed, small-town atmosphere, and, of course, small-town prices. (Our bed and breakfast rate is £10.52 after VAT, and the city's many pubs and occasional restaurants are similarly reasonable.) As for transport, we're on the main BR and National Express routes to Holyhead; no problem. (Anyone for a party on the train up here?) Or, if you come by car, you get the choice of the scenic North Wales coast road or the ridiculously scenic route over Snowdonia, both of which are major roads. (For this part of the world, anyway.)

The ground troops for the convention are Mark Bailey (chairman, membership), Nickey Barnard (publicity), Dave Baynham (secretary, publications), Cath Bircher (site liaison), Nigel Evans (ops, "deputy anything"), Geoff "Jafo" Hale (treasurer), Stewart Johnson (publicity, publications), and Ivan Towlson (programming, publications and Wise Old Birding). Other people from around the country will be rallied round as the occasion demands; we've already had offers from people prepared to help back us up. (Thanks especially to the people from Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and York who helped with the early search for a site.) Our JANET e-mail contact is Nigel on `eeu621@uk.ac.bangor.vaxa`.

We think we can offer you something a little unusual--we don't want to turn out a "holding action" Unicon to carry the torch until a 1992 committee comes along. So come and vote for us at Uniconze, and join up. (We will be honouring ICON presupports, by the way.) This could, after all, be the only chance you get to see SuperTed in the original Welsh.